DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 248 499 CS 207 895

AUTHOR Haskins, Jack B.
TITLE Paradoxes and Quirks in Human Communications Behavior and Some Explanatory Theories.
PUB DATE 7 Apr 81
NOTE 38p.; Paper presented at the Annual Communications Research Symposium (5th, Knoxville, TN, April 7, 1981).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavioral Science Research; *Behavior Patterns; Communication Research; *Individual Needs; *Mass Media; *Need Gratification; Negative Reinforcement; *Neurological Organization; Psychological Needs; *Theories
IDENTIFIERS *Morbid Curiosity

ABSTRACT

A literature review of communications, psychological, physiological and other sociobehavioral research literature reveals a number of paradoxes regarding the emphasis by information gatekeepers, media, and audiences on messages that are negative, critical, pessimistic, conflict-and-tension-producing, skeptical, punitive, threatening, fear-inducing, and otherwise unpleasant in various ways. This attraction to bad news can, in part, be explained by various psychobiological and sociobiological theories that suggest all human behavior is motivated by a biological need for electrical stimuli of the brain, including both positive/pleasure/reward and negative/displeasure/punishment neurological areas. This results in true survival needs (motives/drives/instincts) for both pleasant, immediately rewarding stimuli and unpleasant, immediately punishing stimuli. Morbid curiosity arises from the particular need for stimulation in the negative brain areas. When the actual environment becomes relatively safe, stable, and routine--as it is in most cultures today--the biological need for danger may take, as one of its outlets, the various thrills offered by various contents of mass media. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jack B. Haskins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED248499

PARADOXES AND QUIRKS IN HUMAN COMMUNICATIONS BEHAVIOR AND SOME EXPLANATORY THEORIES[1]

By Jack B. Haskins, Ph.D.
Professor of Journalism
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

A paradox is an apparently self-contradictory statement whose underlying meaning can be revealed if at all only by careful scrutiny and intensive investigation. It is a puzzle that arrests attention and provokes fresh thought about old things recombined into an unusual juxtaposition. My belief is that a paradox contains unusually prolific seeds for new research ideas and for scientific discoveries and creations. For many of us, things that are perfectly consistent are often perfectly boring.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said that a man may love a paradox without losing either his wit or his honesty. I would go further and say that trying to resolve a paradox is a sure-fire way to sharpen understanding and come closer to truth. On the other hand one should beware the folly of mistaking a paradox for a discovery. Discovery only comes when two other elements are added, a hypothesis to resolve the apparent contradiction and then an empirical test of the hypothesis.

Some recent investigations have made me aware of a number of paradoxes, inconsistencies and apparent quirks in human mass communications

---

[1] A paper presented at the Fifth Annual Communications Research Symposium, College of Communications, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, April 7, 1981. After this paper was prepared, notice has been received of a conference on "Paradoxes of Communication in Everyday Life" to be held April 16-18 by Temple University's Department of Speech.

To be published in: Joseph McKerns (Ed.) Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Communications Research Symposium. Knoxville: College of Communications, University of Tennessee, 1981.

CS 207 895

behavior. I've also found some psychobiological theories that might help resolve those paradoxes. If verified by research, some hypotheses derived from those theories might contribute a great deal to our understanding and practice of mass communication.

Some Examples of Human Communications Paradoxes

Here is a small collection of research findings about human communications behavior that are apparently contradictory. Only the bare bones of these paradoxes will be presented at first, saving the explanatory theories for a following section.

Morbid curiosity. It is well known and not surprising that people generally tend to avoid painful, uncomfortable, punishing and other physically unpleasant experiences involving their own person. It seems inconsistent then that these same persons are drawn to, fascinated by and seek out unpleasant experiences affecting other people--accidents, disasters, violence and conflict of all kinds. This mental auto-masochism extends to high interest in the unpleasant offerings of mass media--bad news, violent television programs, horror movies, gothic novels and the like (Haskins, 1981). Why this morbid curriosity in unpleasant events, experienced either directly or vicariously through mass media?

Plato provided at least a recognition of the morbid curiosity paradox, if not an explanation, with this quotation:

> How strange would appear to be this thing that men call pleasure! And how curiously it is related to what is thought to be its opposite, pain! The two will never be found together in a man, and yet if you seek the one and obtain it, you are almost bound always to get the other as well, just as though they were both attached to one and the same head. . . . (Plato, circa 400 B.C.)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Negative information preference. When given equal amounts of positive and negative information on a topic, judgments and opinions are generally influenced more by the negative than by the positive information (Richey et al., 1967). When given a choice between knowing the worst has happened or an unresolved state, not knowing whether the outcome will be favorable or unfavorable, most people prefer to know the worst (Pervin, 1963). Why should negative information get more weight, priority and preference than positive or mixed information?

The contaminated messenger. Even though people are highly interested in many kinds of bad news and other negative information, the vehicle or messenger carrying ill tidings is often perceived more negatively in the eyes of the receiver (Lott & Lott, 1968). Why should a disinterested medium or messenger of bad news be contaminated by his message?

The MUM principle. In face-to-face communications situations, people are generally more reluctant to relay negative information than positive information to another person--i.e., we tend to keep Mum on Unpleasant Messages (Tesser & Rosen, 1975). Why should we be so avidly interested in receiving negative information and yet so reluctant to pass it on?

The journalistic BLAB principle. There is considerable evidence that both newspaper and broadcast journalists prefer to transmit a negative rather than a positive version of an event if given a choice between the two, and they also give more prominent display to more negative events (Haskins, 1981). I've labeled this the BLAB principle. Why

are journalists so eager to transmit and emphasize bad news when other people are reluctant to do so?

Pandora and Jaremiah. A recent national survey found that seven out of ten people think the news media carry "too much bad news," making this their leading complaint against the media (Yankelovich et al., 1979).

If bad news is of such great interest to the public, why is it also the major complaint against the media that bring it? Why do we like to open the Pandora's box of evil tidings in the news media and then wail jaremiads against it?

The cloud with a silver lining. In general the more violence in a news story, the more interested the audience. But it is also true that an optimistic version of a news story is much more interesting than a pessimistic version of the same event. This paradox has been partially clarified by evidence that news interest is further enhanced by a combination of negativism and opt mism--bad news with a positive or constructive twist, problems with their solutions, pro-social approches to anti-social events, tragedy with a happy ending (Haskins, 1973; Bennett, 1979). This leaves unresolved, however, the question of why we prefer the cloud with a silver lining better than either the cloud or the silver lining alone.

Bad times and good news. A content analysis of Florida newspapers revealed that news during the depression of the 1930s was predominantly optimistic and positive, while serious social, economic and political problems were largely ignored (Ashdown, 1969). A pilot study of Knoxville

newspaper front pages from 1893 to 1973 revealed bad news at its lowest point and good news at its highest in 1933, while bad news peaked in 1973, a year when prosperity and other quality-of-life indices were at a relatively high level (Everett, 1979). If verified by further research on other high and low historical points, these findings raise an intriguing question. Why do the news media, through either conscious or unconscious decision process, provide a reversed image of the quality of life, showing more good news in bad times and more bad news in good?

Physical and material vs. psychological well-being. A similar paradox is found in a comparison of physical health and material prosperity on the one hand with indices of happiness, confidence in leadership and crime on the other.

According to one recent summary, things have never been better regarding the nation's health, life expectancy, standard of living as measured by real income, and level of education (Greeley, 1981), despite the recent inflation and recession problems. At the same time, in the last two decades our perceptions of happiness have declined slightly but significantly, violent crime has persistently increased and confidence in the leadership of all institutions has declined significantly (Anonymous, 1981; Clark & Blankenburg, 1971; Magnuson, 1981; Shaver, 1980).

One cannot help but ask why this disparity between physical and material improvement on the one hand and apparent psychological deterioration on the other. Though this is not a communications question per se, the parallel with the Bad Times-Good News paradox and some of the others seems compelling.

The Yin-Yang news-advertising polarization. The average newspaper now contains about sixty per cent advertising, and the rest is devoted to news, entertainment and opinion matter. The themes of advertisements appear to be predominantly positive, stressing the fun, good health, prosperity and other benefits that will come about from buying the advertised products. News, on the other hand, is increasingly negative, with the latest evidence showing somewhat more bad news than good in newspapers and an even higher ratio of bad news in television (Haskins, 1981). In short, news is predominantly negative and pessimistic in tone, while advertising is predominantly positive and optimistic. The question: Does this polarization create tension and uncertainty in the minds of the audience, or does it contribute to a sense of balance and stability--or does it have no effect on audience mood?

One cannot help but be reminded of the ancient Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang. The opposing forces of Yin and Yang were considered to characterize all aspects and phenomena of life. Yin is conceived of as the dark and negative pole, while Yang is considered to be the bright and positive side. (This philosophy must be especially repellent to the ladies of Tennessee, since the dark negative Yin pole is also considered to be feminine and colored orange.)

Addiction to harmful media substances. It is a truism that humans will seek out and become addicted to harmful substances such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs. That fact does not lessen the paradox that people seek out bad news when even a short radio bad newscast creates a depressed mood as well as negative attitudes and behaviors toward other people (Veitch & Griffitt, 1976; Veitch, Dewood & Bosko, 1977; Blackman, Horestein

et al., 1977). The question remains, why do we seek out and become hooked on not only harmful chemical substances but harmful symbolic substances as well?

The iron butterfly. Women are generally considered to be gentler and less aggressive creatures than men, probably due to biological differences. Yet recent studies have shown that young women are more interested than young men in bad news (Haskins, 1981) and more likely to watch violent television programs (Israel & Robinson, 1972). Why should there be a greater desire for bad news and violent drama in those who, biologically and behaviorally, we would expect to be less inclined toward those things?

Adding to this paradox is the finding from two independent studies that newspaper strikes are accompanied by a significant decline in suicides in only one particular group--women under age of 35 (Motto, 1970; Blumental & Berger, 1973). Perhaps it is to be expected that those who are most interested in bad news are also most likely to be harmfully affected by it, which happens to be consistent with the harmful addiction phenomenon.

Those are just a few paradoxical findings from communications and psychological research, and more intensive investigations would undoubtedly reveal others.

Some Promising Explanatory Theories

The intuitive response to all such paradoxes is, why? It is conceivable, first off, that many of the apparent contradictions are simply due to my own selective perception in the choice of facts I chose

to combine or to confounding differences in research details. For heuristic purposes, however, let us assume the paradoxes are true as stated and then examine some basic theories of human behavior that might lead to greater understanding.

These theories come from a variety of other disciplines in which only the specialists in those fields can be thoroughly familiar. Nevertheless, some of their general concepts and principles are at least simplistically comprehensible to the non-expert generalist, and such may be gained by skimming these for explanatory hypotheses. This investigator confesses at the outset to an unabashed, deliberate and valiant effort to extend his reach beyond his grasp for this exercise. Only the pressure of a deadline for this paper has mercifully prevented still greater excesses.

In my opinion, the most promising hypotheses come from the current explosion of research in psychobiology. Psychobiology is a general term referring to neuroscience, psychonomics, and psychophysiology with particular reference to the neurophysiology of the brain. Up until now, most communications researchers, social psychologists, and even hard-nosed experimental psychologists have tried to study the mind and its various outputs with very little concern for the underlying physical events within the brain. It has recently been said, however, that "studying psychological or mental processes without studying the underlying brain structures and mechanisms is no longer meaningful" (Adelman, 1979). That statement may explain the present confused state of research and theory on such perennial communication concepts as "attitudes" and "uses and gratifications." Researchers have at best looked only at the behavioral outputs resulting from communication and even more commonly just

asked simplistic survey questions of respondents on "why" they do this or that, comparable to diagnosing a car engine's malfunctions without looking under the hood. One is reminded of the fable about a group of ancient philosophers arguing at great length over the number of teeth in a horse's mouth. When one radical soul finally proposed that they actually look into a horse's mouth and count the teeth, he was promptly ridiculed and expelled from the society. The present suggestion that further understanding of human communications can only come from research on the brain's nervous system may get a similar reception from practicing mass communicators and from many mass communications researchers.

Nonetheless, here is a brief look at some of the psychobiological theories and evidence that appear relevant here. Fortunately, new technology for direct stimulation and observation of brain processes is leading to more direct investigation.

Lilly's instincts. John Lilly is a medical scientist with a lengthy history of research on the human brain, sensory isolation, drug effects and dolphin-human communications. By implanting electrodes in the brains of various animals, he has found physical locations for both reward and punishment systems within the brain and has induced all sorts of emotional responses from violence to joy (Lilly, 1960). He concludes that there is a true biological or physiological need in the brain for both pleasurable and non-pleasurable stimulation. He goes further to say that too much pleasurable stimulation can be harmful and even fatal, as can excessive painful stimulation.

This leads one to several immediate hypotheses about human communications behavior.

- There is an itch in the punishment centers of the human brain that must be scratched. Seeking unpleasant experiences, reading bad news, watching violent television programs, and paying good money to attend horror movies are various ways of satisfying that need.

- News that combines both unpleasant, tension-producing information and pleasant, tension-reducing information should be more interesting than either type of information alone.

- The desire for bad news and other unpleasant stimuli should be greatest when life is at its rosiest, when we are healthy, happy, safe, stable and prosperous.

- There are undoubtedly great individual differences in the amount of negative stimulation needed, due to individual biological differences. Some people may seek out real, physical, on-line pain and danger; others may achieve the same effect from vicarious exposure to symbolic representations in the mass media.

This biological need for negative stimuli is at least a partial explanation for several of the paradoxes mentioned: the basic morbid curiosity phenomenon, the preference for negative information, journalistic BLAB behavior, the cloud with a silver lining principle, the bad times and good news phenomenon, the physical vs. psychological well-being disparity, and the "Iron Butterfly" phenomenon.

Berlyne's aesthetics. Canadian psychologist D. E. Berlyne has broken new ground in a book titled Aesthetics and Psychobiology (Berlyne, 1971). His basic hypothesis is that aesthetic preferences and responses begin with biological processes in the brain. He observes that Plato and many other leading thinkers through the ages have feared that art might stir up undesirable emotions and behavior. He notes that aesthetic activity is found in all three thousand distinguishable human cultures and must therefore come from some fundamental chracteristics of the human nervous system. While this basic need for aesthetic experience is universal, Berlyne contends that culture and individual experience

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

are responsible for the particular manifestations of our urges.

Some of his propositions are more directly relevant to mass communication and specifically to the paradoxes noted earlier.

What experts call "good" art often stresses unpleasant and even aversive themes, as in the Romantic period when artists were preoccupied with human idiosyncrasy, the unusual, and even the bizarre and macabre.

Berlyne goes a step beyond Lilly to identify three separate neurological locales in the brain that influence the hedonic effects of stimuli--a primary reward system, an aversion system that can overcome the primary reward system, then a secondary reward system that can overcome the aversion system. This makes it possible for certain stimuli to be both rewarding and punishing at the same time--e.g., bittersweet or sweet-and-sour flavors, or, on the vicarious level, tragedy in theater.

What he calls "sublime" pleasure is an electrochemical reaction produced by the idea of pain or danger without the actual experience of punishment, as in the case of tragedy, bad news, violent television and so on.

One point is made over and over--that the interest value of a stimulus is demonstrably different from likability, pleasingness or preference for it; one can be highly interested in things that are either highly liked or highly disliked.

In my opinion, Berlyne's research is truly seminal for understanding mass communications and too rich to really cover here. Here are just a few of the many testable communication ideas I derived from his psychobiological research:

- Interest in bad news may arise from some biological needs for safety or warning from danger. But in a safe and stable environment, morbid curiosity may be emotionally dysfunctional.

- Interest in bad news may represent the dark underbelly of acceptable aesthetic preferences. Either early acculturation or individual brain physiological differences may be responsible for the different strokes preferred by different folks, all the way from the most gruesome stimuli to the most pleasant.

- Morbid curiosity and interest in bad news may be endemic to all human cultures and thus represent some universal psychobiological need. However, one might expect that the degree of interest in bad news would vary from culture to culture, along with the particular subject-matter preferred. Undoubtedly some news that is perceived as bad in one culture will be perceived as good in another. But some things may be perceived as bad in all cultures.

- If the production of unpleasant art has cycled up and down over broad historical periods, the cycles may be related to real historical events. The same principle may apply to journalistic preoccupation with bad news.

- Just as art may predispose one to respond in certain ways to reality, reading bad news may create a predisposition to respond more readily and appropriately to bad events. But too much of this mental rehearsal may also produce an overreaction to innocuous events, perhaps paranoia or overaggressive behavior that is damaging to the self or to others.

- Bad news is probably more interesting to people who lead safe, boring, passive lives. Interest level is probably also variable in the same individual, at a peak after a period of low stimulation, and low after high stimulation.

Campbell's pleasure-seeking. The British physiologist H. J. Campbell (1973) starts with the assertion that "every single aspect of human conduct and aspiration is firmly rooted in material events in the brain" and that our "entire behavior is directed at evoking electrical activity in the brain." Pleasure and displeasure are material physical facts, not just subjective feelings. Through direct electrical stimulation, Campbell concludes that 35 per cent of the brain's volume is devoted to pleasure centers seeking continuous stimulation, while 5 per cent of the brain produces displeasing effects when stimulated.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The remaining 60 per cent of the brain is neutral, with no feelings of either pain or pleasure. This combination of both pleasure-producing and displeasure-producing brain structure produces an attraction to both pleasant and unpleasant stimuli. Since there are individual differences in the amount of electrical stimulation required for either pain or pleasure, some will need strong stimulation while others will need very little. Curiosity, or exploratory behavior, comes about when sensory input is low as an attempt to activate the pleasure areas by searching the environment for stimulation. Moviegoing, pornography and drug addiction are mentioned as examples.

Directly relevant to the communications paradoxes is Berlyne's statement that "this search for heightened sensory pleasure . . . has led to some of the ills of society." He also asserts that "behavior that is involved with matters that rationally must be considered unpleasant in actual fact gives pleasure," mentioning such activities as masochism, sadism, violence, protest and dangerous sports.

Here are some communications hypotheses I derived from Campbell's pleasure-seeking theory:

- For maximum satisfaction to an audience member, the best news mix may consist of 35 per cent good news, 5 per cent bad news, and 60 percent neutral news.
- Some people who use mostly the more primitive centers of the brain will get very little stimulation from the purely verbal news in the mass media, unless it is <u>strongly</u> pleasant or unpleasant.
- Bad news can create depression by activating increased amount of the chemical seritonin in the brain.
- Over-exposure to bad news may be hazardous to both mental and physical health.
- High interest in bad news is related to drug use more than to alcohol use.

- High interest in bad news may be motivated by a desire either for simple brain stimulation in a too-secure and boring world, or for masochistic pain to the self, or for sadistic pain to other persons, depending on the individual's personal biological makeup and environment.
- Interest in bad news will be higher after a dull day, lower after an exciting day.
- High interest in bad news is related to religiosity and other forms of sublimation or repression of natural urges.

Eysenck's personality types. H. J. Eysenck is a British experimental psychologist who theorizes that our nervous structure determines our personalities and hence also our attitudes, preferences and dislikes (Eysenck, 1973). He also maintains that up to 80 per cent of our behavior is predetermined by this genetic inheritance. His two major dimensions of personality are introversion-extraversion and neurosis-stability. Introversion-extraversion is determined by the cerebral cortex, the modern and more human part of the brain, while neurosis-stability is determined by the more primitive autonomic nervous system.

Measurement of brain electrical activity shows that extraverts have less action going on in the cortex than introverts do and consequently require more stimulation. The sensitivity and emotionality of the neurotic personality comes from a physically sensitive and easily activated autonomic system, while the stable personality is relatively less sensitive to external stimuli and requires less of it.

Personalities can be determined by measuring their responses to direct nervous system stimulation. Those classified as neurotic-extraverts are more prone to what we call delinquent behavior, while neurotic-introverts are more prone to fearful avoidance of external stimulation.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Eysenck specifically asks the "neurotic paradox" question, "Why do organisms so frequently persist in behavior which is clearly punishing, or at least more punishing than rewarding?" His explanation is that the neurotic nervous system is more easily activated and more slowly-deactivated than the stable system.

Extraverts typically have a low level of arousal in the morning and higher levels in the evening. Extraverts require less of a sedative drug than introverts do in order to become sedated, while introverts require less of a stimulating drug in order to become aroused. The very same stimulus such as smoking can be tranquilizing for the introvert and stimulating for the extravert.

Several communications hypotheses have occurred to me based on Eysenck's research and theory:

- The avid seeker of bad news is more likely to be a neurotic-extravert, while the neurotic-introvert may be actively repelled by it.
- Extraverts are more likely to be interested in bad news in the morning than in the evening, while introverts will reverse this pattern.
- Involuntary exposure to bad news will cause the introvert to become depressed and the extravert to become pleasantly stimulated.
- Those journalists who over-select bad news for their media are more likely to be alcoholics rather than drug addicts and to be neurotic-introvert personalities.

Zuckerman's sensation-seeking. American psychologist Marvin Zuckerman has validated a sensation-seeking scale based on the theory of a genetically based biochemical need for stimulation in the limbic reward system of the brain (Zuckerman, 1979).

Sensation-seeking is measurably higher for males than for females

and for younger people than for older people. While American and British men have equal sensation-seeking scores, American women score significantly higher than British women. Intelligence has only a slight relationship to sensation-seeking. However, the high sensation-seeker processes information very efficiently and has a high capacity for original thinking that often does not reveal itself in school or college grade point averages. The low sensation-seekers tend to be cognitively simple, unoriginal and nonfluent.

High sensation-seekers tend to have more actual experience with and seek out such things as parties, travel, risky sports, variety, sex, drugs and alcohol. Their personality is characterized as more uninhibited, non-conforming, impulsive and dominant but not related to friendly sociability. Excessively high scorers tend to fit the manic-depressive pattern in both behavior and tests of their physiological chemistry.

More to the point for communications, high sensation-seekers are more likely to attend X-rated movies, read fiction and listen to music. Strangely, sensation-seeking is unrelated to general television watching.

There are actually four dimensions representing different kinds of sensation-seeking, not all of which are highly related to each other. Zuckerman labels these four types as follows: Thrill and Adventure Seeking, linked to direct participation in sports, speed and danger; Experience Seeking, linked to travel, drugs, music, art and an unconventional life style; Disinhibition, the "swinger" type linked to hedonistic activities such as wild parties, social drinking, sexual variety and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

gambling; Boredom Susceptibility, linked to a dislike of repetition, routine, dull people, and monotony of any kind.

In terms of specific hypotheses for communications research, several ideas occur:

- High sensation-seeking should generally be associated with high interest in bad news. If so, men and young people should be more interested than women and older people. American women should be more interested than British women.

- Intelligence and sensation-seeking are independent traits, but intelligence may determine the kinds of information sought out. High seekers with low intelligence should be more interested in news of violence, disaster, and accidents than those of higher intelligence. Those with high intelligence will seek out other kinds of information rather than bad news for stimulation, probably leaning more toward scientific, creative and aesthetic activities.

- The different sub-types of sensation-seekers will probably seek out different kinds of information and mass communication, both bad and good. The preferred subject-matters in mass media will be related to the kinds of sensation they seek out through direct experience.

- The Thrill-Adventure sensation-seeking type should spend less time with mass media and probably is less interested in bad news than the other sub-types of sensation-seekers.

Wilson's sociobiology. Edward Wilson's controversial views on sociobiology are related to the psychobiological theories (Wilson, 1978). Sociobiology is defined as an effort to understand the contribution of natural selection to the brain and hence to behavior. Wilson's basic premise is that the present human brain evolved through natural selection over thousands of generations, resulting eventually in a biological basis for those behaviors with high survival value. Wilson believes that the resulting instincts (needs, drives, motivations) that unconsciously affect our choices, ethics and morality are a complex array

of neurons and hormone-secreting cells within the limbic system.

According to Wilson, "Human nature is a hodgepodge of specific genetic adaptations to an environment largely vanished, the world of the Ice Age hunter-gatherer." Some of those innate behaviors still found in every known human culture are eschatology, faith healing, superstition, magic, belief in supernatural beings, phobias for such things as snakes and heights and enclosed spaces, aggressiveness, and fear of strangers or "outsiders," to name only a few.

Here are a few hypotheses I have derived from sociobiology:

- An alertness to danger has always had high survival value. We are genetically programmed to be alert to certain primitive dangers. When real physical danger is present, interest in bad media news will decrease. In relatively safe environments, bad media news will serve as a need-satisfying substitute and interest will increase unless other methods are used for scratching that limbic itch. Many kinds of bad news--violence, disasters, accidents, and so on--represent dangers which are largely irrelevant in our everyday present lives.

- An over-alertness to irrelevant primitive danger signals--including high interest in irrelevant bad news--is an obsolescent remnant of primitive behavior that is both immediately dysfunctional and on the way out genetically.

- Alertness to currently relevant and important news of realistic danger, on the other hand, has positive survival value. Certain kinds of bad news--e.g., economics, health hazards--probably fall in this category.

- Frequency of exposure to strange objects or ideas leads to familiarity and a reduction of fear. An emphasis on international and non-local news in the mass media will in the long run decrease our innate fear of strangers and tribalistic instincts. Mass communications may eventually be the great peacemaker, if programmed with appropriate content.

- Journalists can either hinder or help the progress of human evolution. They will hinder it by overselection and overemphasis of irrelevant bad news which appeals to primitive fears, an awareness of which, despite possible high interest value, has no survival value in present times. Important negative information, on the other hand, even though of low initial interest, can be made more interesting to the public

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

through frequency and display techniques, and thus contribute to positive survival value.

Tiger's optimism. Anthropologist Lionel Tiger has the theory that optimism is a biologically essential human survival characteristic, a biochemical, genetically ingrained trait that enables us to cope with the problems, fears, dangers, strife and difficulties inherent in all life (Tiger, 1979). However, he also asserts that when reality, or the perception of it, becomes too negative or insurmountable, then the capacity for optimism becomes diminished. A similar but overzealous view is extended by two American psychologists with their "Pollyanna Principle" (Matlin & Stang, 1978). Surprisingly, the optimism anthropologist and the Pollyanna psychologists do not cite each other's works and apparently reached essentially the same conclusions independently at about the same time.

According to Tiger, optimism has survival value even when based on illusion rather than fact. Optimism enhances striving, social structure and cohesion. The survival value of optimism lies not in the Pollyanna-ish notion that all is good, but in the belief that there are positive alternatives mixed in with all the negatives faced in a normal world, this belief giving us the biochemically based energy to work at seeking alternatives even when things are at their worst. It follows of course that pessimism and hopelessness have negative survival value. Faith healing and placebo effects on the one hand, and voodoo deaths on the other, provide real evidence of the respective powers of optimism and hopelessness. He does comment gloomily that "the tools and scope of human mischief have swollen decidedly more rapidly than the means to

understand and (certainly) control them," though he does not specifically mention mass media in this regard.

In Tiger's view, there is real danger in over-exposure to negative information. When people are "in a state of almost constant apprehension because they have lost the human capacity to screen out the signs of danger out of their line of vision" this can result in illness, sexual malfunction, family troubles and other social dysfunctions.

Some of the hypotheses from this that seem appropriate to mass communications are as follows:

- Over-exposure to bad news--particularly involuntary exposure--can be harmful to the individual's mental, physical and social health and contribute to a breakdown of credibility and confidence in the media, government, business and other societal institutions.
- Other kinds of relevant bad news can have increased survival value if tempered with suggestions for action or solution, prescriptions for overcoming, and other constructive approaches beyond mere factual recounts.
- Certain kinds of necessary bad news may have survival value without any positive embellishments.
- Many kinds of highly interesting but irrelevant and non-actionable bad news probably have negative survival value and should be eliminated entirely from the news media.

The optimism theory is thus not incongruent with all the earlier evidence on the various manifestations of morbid curiosity. Optimism, pessimism and realism are undoubtedly independent traits in every individual, co-existing in a neurobiologically-based variety of different motivational tools enabling us to adapt to a correspondingly wide array of external situations. There is no incongruity in the fact that we can both laugh and cry, love and hate, play the piano but not be able to carry a tune, or go to the symphony one night and the "Texas Chain-Saw Massacre" the next. Just so, both optimism and morbid curiosity

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

within reasonable limits may be the necessary Yang and Yin for human adaptation and survival. Realistically, however, the wide range of individual differences in all other human characteristics makes it very likely that some people have too much Yin and others too much Yang rather than a happy balance that would be more felicitous.

Solomon's opponent-process. American psychologist Richard Solomon has proposed a motivation theory which is a scientific version of the old saw, "It feels so good when I quit." He calls it "the opponent-process theory of acquired motivation: the costs of pleasure and the benefits of pain" (Solomon, 1980). He finds that after sufficient repetition there is a pleasurable withdrawal syndrome attached to things that are initially perceived as frightening, disgusting, irritating, or physically painful. What was initially negative becomes positive. The reverse also happens: things that are initially positive result in a negative feeling when removed. His theory explains a wide variety of acquired behaviors such as drug addiction, cravings for sensory and aesthetic experiences, parachuting, marathoning, sauna-bathing and even painful self-administered stimuli such as electrical shocks.

Solomon concludes that "repeated pleasures lose a lot of their pleasantness and make one potentially capable of new sources of suffering; in the same vein, repeated aversive events lose a lot of their unpleasantness and make one potentially capable of new sources of pleasure." Oscar Wilde, of course, anticipated Solomon's wisdom in his epigram that the only way to eliminate a vice is to indulge it.

Solomon asserts that there are both acquired and inherent motives, that the acquired motives can be equally or more powerful than the

biological kind, and that acquired motives follow the same principles and laws as physical addictions.

Here are some of the communications hypotheses that derive from Solomon's theory:

- A liking for bad news is an acquired motive, the basic drive for which might just as easily be channeled into equally painful but more constructive pursuits such as problem-solving, scientific, and creative efforts.
- If at first you dislike bad news, keep trying and you'll eventually become hooked.
- Bad news can become an addiction even without seeking it out. Involuntary or forced exposure to negative stimuli in the mass media is quite prevalent, either through passivity or because the negative stimuli are interspersed with positive stimuli.

MacLean's triune brain. An eminent brain researcher, Paul MacLean, has produced evidence that the human brain has evolved through three distinct stages, all of which are still present in what he calls the triune brain (Long, 1980; MacLean, 1981). Our brain consists of a primal mind called the R-complex from reptiles, overlaid with an emotional mind called the limbic brain from mammals and the more recent addition called the neocortex from later mammals. The basic reptile brain produces aggressive behavior, violence, obsessive-compulsive neuroses, mass hysteria, deception, our daily necessary maintanance routines, and other unthinking, repetitive action. This R-complex is also considered the seat of our basic personalities.

The second layer or limbic brain arrived with the early mammals to provide the seat of love, affection, care of the young, family ties, social bonds in the community, and generally guiding behavior in the direction of emotionally colored feelings. All mammals have this feature.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The third and most recent overlay is the neocortex, present in all animals but presumably at its largest in humans, making possible language, foresight, planning for the future, insights into others' feelings, and that sense of responsibility that we call empathy, conscience, ethics or morality.

MacLean believes that the development of the prefrontal neocortex can be speeded up, to better control aggression and violence and to expand empathy and altruism.

Hypotheses about mass communications from this theory must be very tentative, but some seem appropriate.

- The ideal mix of information for the human will include material to satisfy the stimulation needs of all three brains--the primal reptile brain, the emotional limbic brain, and the reasoning neocortex.
  Since those three functions vary in strength among different individuals, however, the proportions needed will vary. In some individuals, some of the primal needs may be so slight as to be largely satisfied through mass media; in others, those needs may be so strong that the mass media will trigger a catalytic effect, particularly if the limbic brain and neocortex are underdeveloped.

- News of aggression, violence, sex and other primitive behaviors may have either cathartic or catalytic effects on the stimulation needs of the R-complex portion of the brain. This might be determined by brain-wave measurements.

- Information on the family, children, love, affection and other mammalian emotions may appeal primarily to the limbic brain.

- Abstract and other intellectual information not dealing with primal or emotional matters is probably processed by the neocortex.

Effects without awareness. It is conceivable that the effects of bad news and other negative stimuli might vary depending on whether exposure is intentional or forced, active or passive, and with or without conscious awareness.

There does appear to be an unconscious attentional switching-circuit that permits selection or rejection of stimuli without awareness, located in the reticular activating system (RAS) that screens impulses to the cerebral cortex (Furst, 1979). Eye-movement camera studies show that in scanning a newspaper page the individual is physically exposed to virtually every headline on the page, necessary of course in order to make a decision on which items to read and which to reject. On the other hand, readership studies show that conscious awareness or recognition of many items on a newspaper page is relatively low. Apparently the go or no-go evaluation occurs at an unconscious level in the scanning process, but the individual has nevertheless cognitively processed all the items rejected. Some residue from the rejected items, though unrecallable through normal questioning, can probably affect moods and cognitive processes. Thus, an individual who is uninterested in bad news might nevertheless become depressed or otherwise affected simply by scanning bad news headlines even though the stories have been rejected and are not consciously recallable.

On the other hand, bad news that is voluntarily selected will undoubtedly have different effects on mood and pleasurable feelings.

The "high altitude bombardier" hypothesis. The MUM-BLAB paradox mentioned earlier refers to the evidence that individuals in face-to-face situations are generally reluctant to transmit relevant negative information, while journalists appear all too eager to do so through the mass media. It is conceivable that a psychobiological explanation exists for this disparity; for example, many government officials, celebrities, and other press victims might argue that the brains of journalists are abnormally swollen in the lizard-like R-complex region and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

atrophied in the warm and empathetic limbic region, either through genetic inheritance or on-the-job acculturation. In the absence of direct evidence of this through brain measurement, however, this writer offers a non-theoretically based and non-psychobiological but nonetheless serious and testable hypothesis.

Many high altitude bombardiers who rained destruction and bloody death on thousands of civilians and military personnel during various U.S. wars were, to the writer's personal knowledge, mild-mannered and gentle souls who would be reluctant to bring unpleasantness to any creature in person.

Thus, the hypothesis follows: Journalists overselect and overemphasize negative information because (a) the conventional wisdom of the trade and journalistic education assigns the highest priority to negative news values, and (b) in the impersonal process of transmitting information through news media without direct personal feedback, journalists have little knowledge of news effects and no empathy for their anonymous audiences. Non-journalists, if role-playing as journalists in the same situation, would conceivably do the same. Journalists in face-to-face communications situations, on the other hand, might naturally adhere to the MUM principle just as others tend to do in that situation.

Summary and Conclusions

This intensive review of communications, psychological, physiological and other socio-behavioral research literature started from the general hypothesis, based on evidence from an earlier review (Haskins, 1981), that "bad news" and other hypernegative messages are increasingly prevalent in mass media at all stages of the communications process,

that these various manifestations are synergistic, and that they have damaging effects on individuals, on mass media themselves, and on other institutions and processes of the larger society.

Hypernegativism in a communications system has been defined here as an excessive emphasis by information gatekeepers, media and audiences on messages that are negative, critical, pessimistic, conflict-and-tension-producing, skeptical, punitive, threatening, fear-inducing, and otherwise "unpleasant" in various ways.

The evidence from the earlier review produced a number of paradoxes regarding human communications behavior, leading to the present effort to understand the motivations underlying high audience interest in bad news and other instances or morbid curiosity.

Several complementary psychobiological theories have been identified that appear to provide a promising new source of testable hypotheses to help explain both these hypernegativism paradoxes and possibly a wide range of other communications behaviors and motivations as well.

The paradoxes, all based on some, if not conclusive, empirical evidence, may be summarized as follows:

1. The Morbid Curiosity Paradox: Though people generally tend to avoid painful and punishing experiences to their own person, they also manifest high interest in bad news, violent television programs, terror-inspiring movies, and other hypernegative mass media offerings.

2. The Negative Information Preference Paradox: Negative information influences judgment and opinions more than an equal amount of positive information, and people generally prefer to know the worst has happened rather than remain in suspense regarding an outcome.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

3. The Contaminated Messenger Principle: Even though people are highly interested in receiving bad news and other negative information, they come to perceive the disinterested medium or messenger carrying the ill tidings more negatively.

4. The MUM Principle: Though people are highly interested in receiving bad news through the media, there is a general reluctance to transmit negative information to others in face-to-face communications.

5. The MUM-BLAB Paradox: Though people are reluctant to transmit bad news to others in face-to-face communications, newspaper and broadcast journalists strongly prefer to transmit negative rather than positive news through the media and to give extra-prominent display to such hyper-negative news, i.e., a tendency to BLAB bad news.

6. The Pandora-Jeremiah Paradox: Though many kinds of bad news are highly interesting to mass media audiences, the leading audience complaint against news media is "too much bad news."

7. The "Cloud with a Silver Lining" Paradox: Though increased violence in a news story is generally accompanied by increased audience interest, an optimistic version of an article is strongly preferred over a pessimistic version. Interest is at its highest, however, in stories with a combination of negativism and optimism--bad news with a constructive twist, problems with their solutions, pro-social angles to anti-social events, tragedy with a happy ending.

8. The "Bad Times and Good News" Paradox: In bad times, such as the great depression, the news media tend to overemphasize good news, while in relatively good times they tend to overemphasize bad news. Similarly, while objective measures of the quality of life--health,

life expectancy and material standard of living--have been steadily improving in recent years, there has been an accompanying deterioration in psychological indices of well-being--decreased happiness, decreased confidence in leadership of societal institutions, and an increase in violent crimes.

9. The Yin-Yang News-Advertising Polarization Paradox: While the news content of media is increasingly negative and pessimistic in tone, advertising themes tend to be predominantly positive, stressing the fun, health, prosperity and other benefits to be derived from buying the advertised products.

10. The Harmful Media-Substance Addiction Paradox: Though exposure to bad news produces depressed mood, jaundiced attitudes toward other persons, and other harmful psychological and behavioral effects, news audiences still tend to seek out bad news and other negative media themes and programs.

11. The Iron Butterfly Paradox: Though women are generally considered to be gentler and less aggressive creatures than men, young women are more interested than young men in bad news and violent television themes. In addition, news of suicides is accompanied by a significantly increased suicide rate only among young women.

Psychobiological Explanations

The recent upsurge in psychobiological research and theory provides some logical explanations for these communications paradoxes and other mass communications behaviors as well as for more general behavioral motivations.

Nine major psychobiological and sociobiological theories have

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

been reviewed here, differing in certain details but with a common underlying concept that motivations, needs, instincts and drives originate within the brain's neurological structure. These theories may be briefly and simplistically stated as follows:

Medical scientist John Lilly (1960) proposed that there are phyical locations for both reward and punishment centers in the brain, that there are true biological needs for both pleasurable and non-pleasurable stimuli, and that too much pleasurable stimulation can be harmful and even fatal.

Psychologist D. E. Berlyne (1971) maintained that since aesthetic behavior is found in all three thousand distinguishable human cultures, it must derive from some fundamental biological characteristics of the brain and nervous system. He identifies a hierarchy of three separate neurological locales in the brain--a primary reward system, an aversion system, and a secondary reward system. This tripartite system makes it possible for certain stimuli to be simultaneously rewarding and punishing, with a particular kind of "sublime" pleasure in the form of an electrochemical reaction produced by the idea of pain or danger when not physically subjected to such. He produces clear evidence that the interest value or attraction of a stimulus is unrelated to its likability or pleasingness.

Physiologist H. J. Campbell (1973) asserted that our entire behavior is motivated by a need to evoke electrical activity in the brain, which is physically comprised of pleasure areas, displeasure areas, and a large neutral area. This results in an attraction to both pleasant and unpleasant stimuli, in the form of exploratory behavior to seek stimuli that will activate the positive and negative neurological areas,

and thus pleasure is derived from activities that might rationally be considered unpleasant.

Psychologist H. J. Eysenck (1973) theorized that our nervous structure largely determines our personalities and hence also our attitudes, preferences and dislikes, and that over half of our behavior is predetermined by this genetic inheritance. He postulates two major dimensions of personality, introversion-extraversion which is determined by the cerebral cortex, and neurosis-stability stemming from the more primitive autonomic nervous system. In response to the "neurotic paradox" question as to why many organisms seek out punishing experiences, his explanation is that the stable nervous system is less easily activated and more speedily deactivated than the neurotic system, and that the very same stimulus can be pleasing to the extravert and displeasing to the introvert and vice versa.

Psychologist Marvin Zuckerman (1979) has validated a sensation-seeking scale (SSS) based on the theory of a genetically based biochemical need for stimulation within the limbic reward system of the brain. High scorers on the SSS tend to be uninhibited, non-conforming and impulsive, fitting the manic-depressive pattern in both behavior and physiological chemistry, and they seek out both physical and symbolic sensation-producing stimuli that might be avoided as painful or unpleasant by low-scorers.

Sociobiologist Edward Wilson (1978) theorized that the present human brain evolved through natural selection over thousands of generations, resulting in a biological basis for those behaviors with high survival value. The resultant instincts, needs or motivatons are a complex array of neurons and hormone-secreting cells within the limbic

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

system, though some are considered obsolescent, obsolete and even dysfunctional specific genetic adaptations to the Ice Age hunter-gatherer stages of our existance.

Anthropologist Lionel Tiger (1979) theorized that optimism is a biologically essential human survival characteristic, based on biochemical, genetically ingrained properties enabling us to cope with the problems and dangers inherent in all life. Optimism has survival value even when based on illusion rather than fact, since it enhances striving, social structure and cohesion by providing biochemically based energy to seek alternatives even when situations are at their worst. On the other hand, when reality or our perception of it becomes too negative, this results in pessimism and hopelessness which have negative survival value. Thus, there is real danger from over-exposure to negative information when it diminishes the capacity to perceive real signs of danger.

Psychologist Richard Solomon (1980) has proposed "the opponent-process theory of acquired motivation" which explains some disadvantages of pleasure and advantages of pain. He proposed that acquired motives can be as strong or stronger than inherent biological motives and that they follow the same principles as physical addictions. He finds that, after sufficient repetition, there is a pleasurable withdrawal syndrome attached to things initially perceived as unpleasant ("It feels so good when I quit") and conversly that initially positive things can result in a negative feeling when removed.

Neurological scientist Paul MacLean (1981; Long, 1980) has theorized that the human brain evolved through three identifiable stages, all of which are still present in what he calls the triune brain. In

hierarchical fashion, there is the primal reptilian or R-complex mind responsible for affection, care of the young, and family-social bonds. This is overlaid with the early mammalian limpic brain responsible for affection, care of the young, and family-social bonds. These are overlaid with the more recent mannalian development of the neocortex, at its largest in humans to produce language, foresight, empathy, morality and other manifestations of social responsibility.

A Psychobiological Hypothesis for Morbid Curiosity

Many specific testable hypotheses, as derived from the specific psychobiological theories, regarding the attraction to bad news, other manifestations of morbid curiosity, other hypernegative communication behaviors and various paradoxes have been presented earlier in this paper.

A more general hypothesis is proposed here based on the common features and implications of those theories.

Morbid curiosity is defined as an attraction to and search for stimuli that might rationally be considered as unpleasant, frightening, dangerous, critical, pessimistic, conflict-producing, punitive, threatening or otherwise indicative of undesirable events. Among the various manifestations of morbid curiosity are high interest in bad news, violent television programs, horror movies and other hypernegative mass media messages. The basic underlying motivation for such morbid curiosity is a true biological need for both negative and positive stimulation within the nervous system.

That need arises from the fact that the human brain has evolved through natural selection of those behaviors with survival value, over the thousands of generations from man's earliest forebears. The brain is still evolving and, along with specific genetic adaptations which

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

are useful, retains many properties which are obsolescent, obsolete or even dysfunctional in present-day life. The present triune brain includes, in ascending evolutionary order, the R-complex or reptilian brain, the limbic or early mammalian overlay, and the neocortex or more recent mammalian brain; the latter includes adaptations identifiable as leftovers from man's largely vanished hunter-gatherer stages.

Man's entire behavior is motivated by a biological need for stimuli which will evoke electrical activity in various neurological areas of the brain, including both positive/pleasure/reward areas and negative/displeasure/punishment areas requiring specialized stimulation. This results in true survival needs (motives/drives/instincts) for both pleasant immediately rewarding stimuli and unpleasant immediately punishing stimuli. In short, there is a diversity of specialized itches in the brain's neurological system, each of which needs scratching by special stimuli. The different strokes needed by different folks probably arise from differences in acculturation.

Curiosity, defined as a tendency to investigate or obtain information, probably arises when the stimulation needs of the positive, negative and other brain areas are not supplied spontaneously by the environment, resulting in exploratory or sensation-seeking behavior. Morbid curiosity arises from the particular need for stimulation in the negative brain areas.

It also seems appropriate to add an original sociobiological speculation to the basic hypothesis, in order to account more specifically for high interest in bad news, violent television programs, horror movies, and other instances of hypernegative audience preferences. An alertness to relevant danger has always had high survival value and thus has achieved

a neurological niche in the brain, possibly as part of the negative/punishment area. Since our brains do contain some obsolete or obsolescent remnants from a more primitive world of real physical violence and danger, many persons are undoubtedly still programmed to be on the alert for such signs. When the actual environment becomes relatively safe, stable and routine as it is in most cultures today, the biological need for danger signals in the environment may take, as one of its outlets, the vicarious thrills offered by various contents of mass media. In some persons, either through higher intelligence or early acculturation or maturation, this need may be at least partially sublimated into aesthetic, creative or scientific behaviors; others will satisfy the need with bad news and such.

It's also likely that there are personal day-to-day variations in need for hypernegative mass media stimuli which are related to variations in real danger from the environment. "Dangerous" days or situations might lead to a decreased interest in bad news in some circumstances, to heightened interest in others, depending on the kind or level of danger involved.

In addition to the specific hypotheses previously derived from the individual theories, the general psychobiological hypothesis just proposed can spawn many more specific testable ideas for increasing our unde standing of the communications paradoxes listed earlier and of other communications puzzles such as "attitude" and "uses and gratifications" research.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Adelman, George. "Psychology and Neuroscience: Converging on the Mind-Body Problem." Contemporary Psychology 24(6), June 1979, pp. 449-451.

Anonymous, "The Paradox of Well-Being." ISR Newsletter, Spring 1981, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, pp. 3-4.

Ashdown, Paul G. An Historical Study of Florida Journalism and the Great Depression. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Florida, 1969.

Bennett, Ellen. "Factor Analysis of Stereotyped News Headlines." Unpublished final project report, Statistics 6070, University of Tennessee, 1979.

Berlyne, D. E. Aesthetics and Psychobiology, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971.

Blackman, Julie A., Harvey Hornstein, Charles Devine, Mary O'Neill, Janice Steil and Lyle Tucker. "Newscasts and the Social Actuary." Public Opinion Quarterly 41(3), Fall 1977, pp. 295-313.

Blumenthal, Sol and Lawrence Bergner. "Suicide and Newspapers: A Replicated Study." American Journal of Psychiatry 130(4), April 1973, pp. 468-471.

Campbell, H. J. The Pleasure Areas: A New Theory of Behavior. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973.

Clark, David G. and Blankenburg, William B. "Trends in Violent Content in Selected Mass Media." Comstock, George A. and Rubinstein, Eli A. (Editors), Television and Social Behavior, Reports and Papers Volume 1. Rockville, Md.: National Institute of Mental Health, Circa 1971, pp. 188-243.

Everett, George A. "Trends in Front Page Bad News, 1893-1973: A pilot study." Unpublished paper, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, November 1979.

Eysenck, H. J. "Personality and the Law of Effect." In Berlyne, D. E. and Madsen, K. B. (editors), Pleasure, Reward and Preference. N.Y.: Academic Press, 1973, pp. 133-166.

Furst, Charles. "Automating Attention." Psychology Today, August 1979, p. 112.

Greeley, Andrew M. "The State of the Nation's Happiness." Psychology Today, January 1981, pp. 14-16.

Haskins, Jack B. "Cloud With a Silver Lining Approach to Violence News." Journalism Quarterly, 1973, 50(3), pp. 549-552.

Haskins, Jack B. "The Trouble With Bad News." Newspaper Research Journal, 2(2), January 1981, pp. 3-16.

Israel, H. and J. P. Robinson. "Demographic Characteristics of Viewers of Television Violence and News Programs." E. A. Rubinstein et al (Eds.) Television and Social Behavior Vol. 4, Television in Day-to-Day Life: Patterns of Use. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1972, pp. 87-128.

Lilly, John C. "The Psychophysiological Basis for Two Kinds of Instincts: Implications for Psychoanalytical Theory." Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 8(4), October 1960.

Long, Mary. "Ritual and Deceit." Science Digest, November/December 1980, pp. 87-91, 121.

Lott, A. J. and Lott, B. E. "A Learning Theory Approach to Interpersonal Attitudes." In A. G. Greenwald, T. C. Brock and T. M. Ostrom (Eds). Psychological Foundations of Attitudes: Academic Press, 1968, pp. 67-88.

MacLean, Paul D. "Family Feeling in the Triune Brain." Psychology Today, February 1981, p. 100.

Magnuson, Ed. "The Curse of Violent Crime," Time, 117(12), March 23, 1981, pp. 16-21

Matlin, Margaret W. and David J. Stang. The Pollyanna Principle: Selectivity in Language, Thought and Memory. Cambridge, Mass.: Schekman Publishing Company, 1978.

Motto, Jerome A. "Newspaper Influence on Suicide." Archives of General Psychiatry 23, 1970, pp. 143-148.

Pervin, Lawrence A. "The Need to Predict and Control Under Conditions of Threat." Journal of Personality, 1963, 31, pp. 570-587.

Plato, Phaedo, circa 400 B.C.

Richey, M. H. et al. "Relative Influence of Positive and Negative Information in Impression Formation and Persistence." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1967, pp. 322-327.

Shaver, Phillip. "The Public Distrust." Psychology Today, 14(5), October 1980, pp. 44-49, 102.

Solomon, Richard L. "The Opponent-Process Theory of Acquired Motivation: The Costs of Pleasure and the Benefits of Pain." American Psychologist, 35(8), August 1980, pp. 691-712.

Tesser, Abraham and Sidney Rosen. "The Reluctance to Transmit Bad News." Berkowitz, L. (editor) Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 8, New York: Academic Press, 1975, pp. 193-232.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Veitch, Russell, Robert Dewood and Kathy Bosko. "Radio News Broadcasts: Their Effects on Interpersonal Helping." Sociometry, 1977, 40(4) pp. 383-386.

Veitch, Russell and William Griffitt. "Good News-Bad News: Affective and Interpersonal Effects." Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 1976, 6(1), pp. 69-75.

Wilson, Edward. On Human Nature. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc. "Tracking the Attitudes of the Public Toward the Newspaper Business," ANPA News Research Report No. 19, April 20, 1979.

Zuckerman, Marvin. Sensation Seeking: Beyond the Optimal Level of Arousal. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979.